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The Secretary of State (Seniors) calls on Canadians to help prevent elder abuse

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, June 14, 2007 — The Honourable Marjory LeBreton, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Secretary of State (Seniors), is calling on all Canadians to work together to help prevent the abuse of older adults.

June 15, 2007, marks the second annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Elder abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal or financial in form. Neglect can also be considered a form of abuse. Many seniors do not report abuse, or feel isolated and afraid to speak out. As a result, the problem of elder abuse remains largely hidden behind closed doors. Canadian research indicates that between four and ten percent of older adults experience some kind of abuse or neglect.

"World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the abuse of older adults as a means to prevent and combat all types of elder abuse," said Minister LeBreton. "We must find ways to show Canadian seniors that elder abuse exists, that it is not tolerated, and that there is help available in our communities to cope. This includes finding ways not only to help victims, but to prevent abuse before it happens."

Canada's New Government is addressing the problem of elder abuse, in all its ugly forms, through a variety of actions:

- The National Seniors Council was created in March 2007 to advise Canada's New Government on seniors' issues of national importance. Canada's New Government has asked the Council to focus some of its first efforts on finding ways to raise awareness of elder abuse and to combat it.
- Budget 2007 announced the expansion of the New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) by $10 million per year, with a portion of the new funding to be used for education about elder abuse and fraud. To date, the NHSP has funded over 1,700 projects, benefiting more than 100,000 participants in over 430 communities across Canada.
- The Family Violence Initiative (FVI), coordinated by the Public Health Agency of Canada, consists of 15 member departments, and promotes public awareness of the risk factors of family violence, and the need for public involvement in responding to it. The FVI has identified the abuse of older adults as an issue warranting specific attention in the context of family violence. The FVI theme for June is elder abuse, and it is highlighted in the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence's E-Bulletin.
- Canada's New Government participates in the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Safety and Security for Seniors, which has developed materials to help promote awareness of abuse and neglect of older adults. These resources may be found on the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse's Web site at www.cnpea.ca.

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This news release is available in alternative formats upon request.

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backgrounder
Senate Statement
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Honourable Senators, tomorrow on June 15, Canadians will join together to recognize the second annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was first declared last year by the World Health Organization and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of the abuse of older adults as a means to prevent and combat all types of elder abuse.

It is also an opportunity to recognize the local, provincial, territorial and federal partnerships that promote the safety, security and well-being of seniors. In Canada, elder abuse has become a priority issue for all levels of government.

Elder abuse exists in many ugly forms—whether it is physical, emotional, verbal financial, or even sexual. Many seniors do not report abuse. They often feel isolated and afraid to speak out. As a result, elder abuse remains largely hidden behind closed doors.

Canada's New Government is already taking action to help raise awareness of the existence of elder abuse.

Budget 2007 announced a $10 million dollar increase to the New Horizons for Seniors Program, from $25 million to $35 million. Some of this additional funding will be used to combat elder abuse and fraud, and invest in community programs to raise awareness.

Our Government also recently established the National Seniors Council to advise the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, the Minister of Health, and myself on issues of national importance to seniors. I am very proud to be leading the Council in its day-to-day activities.

As Secretary of State for Seniors, I have asked the Council to first focus its work on two hugely important issues: raising awareness to combat elder abuse, and providing support to low-income single senior women.
Honourable Senators, we need to work together to stand up for those who have helped build this country to make it what it is today.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day offers the opportunity to change attitudes and behaviours when it comes to the abuse of older adults.

I ask that all Honourable Senators work to help our Government reach out to our seniors' communities so that we can break down the wall of silence and show Canadians that elder abuse exists, that it is not tolerated, and that there is help available in our communities.

Thank you.

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